

Regional Conference: “Media in Times of War”

12-13 October 2022, Tbilisi, Georgia

**Hotel Pullman Axis Towers
Conference hall "Ball Room 1"
37M Chavchavadze Ave, Tbilisi 0179, Georgia**

The ongoing war in Ukraine has strongly affected media environment in the country and influenced the region and beyond, causing an information war, propaganda, and thus, putting the regional media landscape into a fragile and vulnerable grounds.

Since February 2022, journalists and media organisations and associations in the region are experiencing new challenges and acceleration of existing ones: countering disinformation as the major challenge for most of the media outlets; countering the increased and uncontrolled hate speech in media; the safety of journalists; broadening restrictions and spread of propaganda; and covering and reporting on the war (while preserving military security on the one hand and considering the vulnerability and dignity of war victims, on the other).

These challenges require an increased responsibility from journalists and media organisations in order that they secure professional coverage of the events and ensure safety of journalists and media workers in war times.

The Council of Europe instruments in the field of media and freedom of expression cover a range of issues¹ and offer guiding recommendations and principles for its member state’ governments and media actors.

The Council of Europe’s Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists has been, and in times of war and armed conflicts remains, the tool to inform a broader audience and enable follow-up on crimes committed against journalists.

The Council of Europe’s Division for Co-operation on Freedom of Expression works closely with media stakeholders in the five Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) through ongoing cooperation projects,² aimed at promoting media freedom and professionalism, freedom of expression and safety of journalists.

In the view of certain commonalities in all five countries of the region, a Regional Conference dedicated to “Media in Times of War” will take place in Tbilisi, Georgia on 12 and 13 October 2022.

¹ [European Convention on Human Rights](#) and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights; [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2016\)4](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors; [Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on protecting freedom of expression and information in times of crisis](#) (adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 26 September 2007 at the 1005th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies); [Recommendation No. R \(96\) 4](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection of journalists in situations of conflict and tension adopted on 3 May 1996.

² Projects “[Strengthening Media Freedom, Internet Governance and Personal Data Protection in Georgia](#)” (2021-2023); “[Support to Safety of Journalists, Media, and of Access to Information in Ukraine](#)” (Apr-Dec 2022); “[Support for Media Pluralism and Freedom of Expression in the Republic of Moldova](#)” (2022-2024) and “[Promoting media professionalism and freedom of information in Azerbaijan](#)” (2022-2025)

SCOPE AND AIM OF THE CONFERENCE

The regional conference “Media in Times of War” intends to facilitate discussion among national stakeholders of five Eastern Partnership countries - **Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine** – aimed at addressing challenges faced during war/armed conflicts. These include:

- safety of journalists and other media actors
- disinformation
- hate speech
- conflict-sensitive coverage/reporting; and practices/guidelines
- media regulation.

The regional conference will also serve as a platform to the media actors from Ukraine, to share their experience on how Ukrainian media has evolved (since February 2022), while coping with ongoing challenges and new trends.

Two side events will be organised during the conference: a photo exhibition “The Russian war against Ukraine: Work of journalists” (on 12 October 2022); and the screening of documentary [MARIUPOLIS 2 - Festival de Cannes \(festival-cannes.com\)](https://www.festival-cannes.com/en/2022/program/feature-film/mariupolis-2) (on 13 October 2022) about work of journalists in times of war, which was presented in Cannes in May 2022.

PARTICIPANTS

Primary participation will include media (national and regional media outlets, TV, online and print media), independent journalists, and other media actors. International organisations and diplomatic representations in Tbilisi, as well as authorities, academia and civil society organisations will be invited to attend the conference.

ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Date and time

The event will take place in Tbilisi, Georgia on 12 and 13 October 2022 (12 October, 9:30 – 18:30 and 13 October, 9:30 – 19:00).

Venue

Hotel Pullman Axis Towers
Conference hall "Ball Room 1"
Address: 37M Chavchavadze Ave, Tbilisi 0179, Georgia.

Language

The event will be organised in English and Georgian languages with simultaneous interpretation. The panel session devoted to Ukraine will ensure the interpretation in three languages (Ukrainian, English, Georgian).

Participation

The participation is foreseen through presence. Remote connection of participants will be enabled for those who wish to attend online or cannot travel.

Event scale

It is envisaged to invite up to **80 participants to attend in person**, including speakers from Georgia, countries of the region and external experts.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME
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DAY 1	
9:30 – 10:00	Registration/Welcome Coffee
10:00 - 10:45	<p>Opening remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Patrick Penninckx, Head of the Information Society Department, Council of Europe ⇒ Natalia Voutova, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia ⇒ H.E. Helene Sand Andresen, Ambassador of Norway to Georgia ⇒ H.E. Ulrik Tideström, Ambassador of Sweden to Georgia ⇒ Ilia Darchiashvili, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia (TBC)
10:45 - 12:15	<p>PANEL 1: Media in Ukraine before and after February 24, 2022</p> <p><i>Media actors across Eastern Partnership countries observed the evolution of Ukrainian media over the last months, including its fight against propaganda and strategic communication with the local and international audience. In the view of on-going war and exciting unresolved conflicts in the Eastern Partnership region, the experience of Ukraine and moreover, the possibility of sharing experiences when it comes to media and journalism in times of war and conflict[s], becomes extremely valuable. This panel discussion is aimed at facilitating the possibility of sharing practices and lessons learned on how Ukrainian media is handling the coverage of war and its main challenges. Perspectives from the media, Ukrainian regulatory authority and civil society organisations will be elaborated.</i></p> <p>Welcoming address by Mr Andrii Kasianov, Chargé d'affaires of Ukraine in Georgia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Svitlana Ostapa, Chair of the Supervisory Board of Ukrainian Public Broadcaster ⇒ Galyna Petrenko, Director of CSO “Detector Media” ⇒ Olga Herasymiyuk, Chair of the National TV and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine ⇒ Olga Rudenko, Editor-in-Chief of the Kyiv Independent, an award-winning media start-up ⇒ Olena Leptuga, Editor-in-Chief of Media Group Nakypilo (Kharkiv) <p>Moderator: Mamuka Andguladze, Council of Europe expert.</p>
12:15 - 13:30	Lunch break

13:30 - 14:45	<p>PANEL 2: Hate speech in media: how the aggression of Russian Federation against Ukraine accelerated already existing challenges (for media) and what is the way forward?</p> <p><i>While hate speech in the media continue to be a challenge across all Eastern Partnership countries, the war in Ukraine augmented its scale dramatically. The present panel session will elaborate on what developments the media actors have observed across the countries and what the upcoming CoE instruments on hate speech promise in terms of solutions.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Eliška Pírková, Council of Europe expert, Europe Policy Analyst and Global Freedom of Expression Lead, Access Now ⇒ Irina Corobcenco, Promo-LEX Association, Moldova ⇒ Emin Huseynzada, Media Expert, Azerbaijan ⇒ Boris Navasardian, President of Yerevan Press Club, Armenia <p>Moderator: Urška Umek, Head of Unit at Media and Internet Division, Council of Europe.</p>
14:45 - 15:15	<p>Coffee break</p>
15:15 - 16:30	<p>PANEL 3: Safety of journalists during the war: mission (im)possible?</p> <p><i>The challenge to preserve the physical as well as digital safety of journalists is one of the most difficult tasks for media stakeholders. With the number of journalists killed since February 2022 in Ukraine and others still reporting under the threat to life, the question of how to protect journalists during the war remains actual. This panel session will elaborate on practical challenges for journalists reporting from the war zone, lessons learned, good practices and the obligations of the State and the media outlets vis-à-vis the journalists.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Jeane Cavalier, Head of Eastern Europe and Central Asia Desc at Reporters Without Borders (partner of the CoE Platform on safety of journalists) ⇒ Chantal Joris, Law and Policy expert, ARTICLE 19 ⇒ Natalia Vyhovska, Head of Regional Network of the Institute of Mass Information, Ukraine ⇒ Goga Aptsiauri, War Correspondent, Georgia <p>Moderator: Mamuka Andguladze, Council of Europe Expert.</p>
16:30 - 17:00	<p>Conclusions and closing remarks</p>
17:00	<p>Photo Exhibition</p> <p>#OntheFrontlineOfTruth</p> <p>The Russian war against Ukraine: “Work of journalists”</p>
17:00 - 18:30	<p>Reception.</p>

DAY 2	
9:30 - 10:00	Registration/Welcome Coffee
10:00 - 11:15	<p>PANEL 4: Media Regulation in times of war and armed conflicts</p> <p><i>The purpose of this panel session is to elaborate on why and how countries regulate media vis-à-vis war and armed conflicts and which new regulations have been enacted in respective countries following the war in Ukraine? How these regulations work?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Emir Powlakic, CoE expert, Head of Division of Communication Regulatory Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bureau member of the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) ⇒ Levan Maisuradze, Chief Specialist at Legal Department of the Communications Commission, Georgia ⇒ Olga Herasymiyuk, Chair of the National TV and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine ⇒ Aneta Gonta, Deputy Chair of the Audiovisual Council of Moldova <p>Moderator: Urška Umek, Head of Unit at Media and Internet Division, Council of Europe.</p>
11:15-11:45	Coffee break
11:45-13:00	<p>PANEL 5: Combatting information disorder and propaganda</p> <p><i>The war in Ukraine has brought the fight against disinformation and propaganda to a new level. The media across all five countries has to report on the war in a swift and clear manner, while at the same time, making its way through the wealth of information (including disinformation). The present panel session will provide the exchange of experience among journalists of several countries on the strategies used to combat propaganda, and on the role of fact checking organisations and the Governments in this process.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Tanja Kersevan, Council of Europe expert ⇒ Olga Yurkova, media expert, co-founder of StopFake, Ukraine ⇒ Tamar Kintsurashvili, Director at Media Development Foundation, Georgia ⇒ Alina Radu, Director of independent investigative newspaper “Ziarul de Garda”, Moldova <p>Moderator: Urška Umek, Head of Unit at Media and Internet Division, Council of Europe.</p>
13:00-14:15	Lunch
14:15-15:45	PANEL 6: Conflict-sensitive media coverage: Do’s and Don’ts

	<p><i>Journalists of all five countries have experience of reporting on the war and its victims. There is a common understanding among media actors that war reporting is a special case necessitating extreme accuracy and awareness. The present panel session will elaborate on what the journalists should and should not do while reporting on the war.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Peter du Toit, Council of Europe Expert ⇒ Yevhen Spirin, Editor-in-Chief of Babel online news portal, Ukraine ⇒ Seymur Kazimov, Conflict Reporter, Azerbaijan ⇒ Tamar Rukhadze, Charter of Journalistic Ethics, Georgia ⇒ Nouneh Sarkissian, Executive Director of Media Initiatives Center, Armenia <p>Moderator: Ekaterine Basilaia, Council of Europe Expert.</p>
15:45 - 16:15	Conclusions and closing remarks
16:15 - 16:45	Coffee Break
16:45 - 19:00	Screening of the Documentary Film Mariupolis 2, followed by the discussion.